

Making it Right: Hawaiian Approaches to Conflict Resolution

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Aloha! For the duration of this piece, I am going to say that we are “on the canoe.” Now when I say “on the canoe,” you are probably thinking of the little kind with two paddles. No, I am talking about the Polynesian voyaging canoe. The Polynesians used to travel thousands of miles across the ocean and find unsettled Pacific islands. When you are on the voyaging canoe, you always know where you are. And where are you? You are *on the canoe*. That is where you are. So, in Oceanic thinking, when you are shooting for a distant island, the canoe is actually standing still and you are pulling the island to you until it rises up over the horizon. They called it “raising the island.”

In the meantime, we are on the canoe. What is interesting about being on the canoe is, if you are traveling 2,500 miles on one of these vessels with about twelve or thirteen other people, you have to learn how to get along and not kill each other. This is going to relate to conflict resolution a little bit, but I am not going to focus on it too much.

Since we are in the canoe, I would like to start with recognizing the Hōkūle‘a, the Polynesian voyaging canoe. Its maiden voyage in 1976 revived oceanic voyaging. Today there are voyaging canoes all over the Pacific. And I was lucky enough to serve briefly on Hōkūle‘a, but only in the Chesapeake Bay, and it was not exciting. Hōkūle‘a just finished a trip all the way around the world. It took them three years to bring the messages of looking at the Earth, and sustainability, and working together.

Let us launch our canoe, shall we? I am going to quote the canoe chant, which basically says: “Here comes the canoe, here comes the canoe, it is such a big canoe, there is not even any spray from the ocean; the navigator is so good he could navigate on the worst day; we move the canoe forward with the paddle and the bailer; come land over here at this new place, go land over there at that new place, yay the canoe has arrived.” That is what the chant says:

Aue ua hiti e! Ua hiki e ‘o Hōkūle‘a e!

Aue ua hiti e!

Hele ka wa‘a i ke kai e,

Ho‘okele wa‘a lā ‘ino e
‘A‘ohe e pulu, wa‘a nui e,
Aue ua hiti e!
E lauhoe mai ka wa‘a i ke kā
I ka hoe
I ka hoe,
I ke kā
E pae aku I ka ‘āina la
E pae maila i ka ‘āina e
Aue ua hiti e!

Once you get to where you are going on a canoe, and you land at a new island, you see that you are still on a “vessel” surrounded by water. Hence the saying, “a canoe is an island, the island is a canoe.” The principles of getting along on the canoe are the same principles you need for getting along on an island. This is the thing about islands that make them different from living on a great big continent like this. You cannot get away from people easily. It takes about twenty minutes to walk across Falalop, the big island on the atoll of Ulithi in western Micronesia. And that is the “big” island, so you can imagine how small the small islands are. Thus you have to learn to live together.

The important thing in such a culture is to try to mitigate against conflict from the outset, or if you have conflict, have ways to deal with it. You cannot spend a lot of time being pissed off at your neighbor, your cousin, or whomever, because you are going to run into them again and again and again. You need to learn to deal with it; you need to learn to have balance and fairness. Hawaiian culture is full of stories, myths, and legends where somebody was cheating somebody, trying to get away with it, and in the end that person always gets their comeuppance—or they get killed. The moral of all these stories, of course, is “do not do that,” or “that is not how to live together.”

For Hawaiian society, the islands are large, and divided administratively into districts, big wedges running from the mountains to the sea. Within those are smaller wedges that are the basic administrative units. The reason for the shape of these is that they cut across all the environmental and resource zones, from the high forests through the agricultural land, to the shore, and then out a ways into the ocean, usually to the edge of the reef or, where there is no reef, a certain distance out into the ocean. Within these wedges, the main unit of organization is the extended family.

Chiefs in Hawai‘i would come and go: they’d fight each other, they’d do their thing, they’d take over, they are just sort of administrators. It is the family unit, the extended family, that really does the work. People in the upland areas farm, people in the coastal areas fish and gather on the reef, and so forth. And they exchange with each other, since you cannot do it all. Thus you have an economy within the

extended family, and this is where you had better not be cheating your cousin or whoever, because it is not going to work out well at the end. You are going to upset the balance. This is the sort of social situation that we have in the Hawaiian Islands. Every culture organizes their place differently; it is going to be different at Tahiti, at Samoa, in New Zealand. This is the Hawaiian version, and that is what we are talking about tonight. You are embedded in a network of responsibilities and obligations; people are obliged to you at the same time. There is give and take. You have to work on and maintain balance within that network.

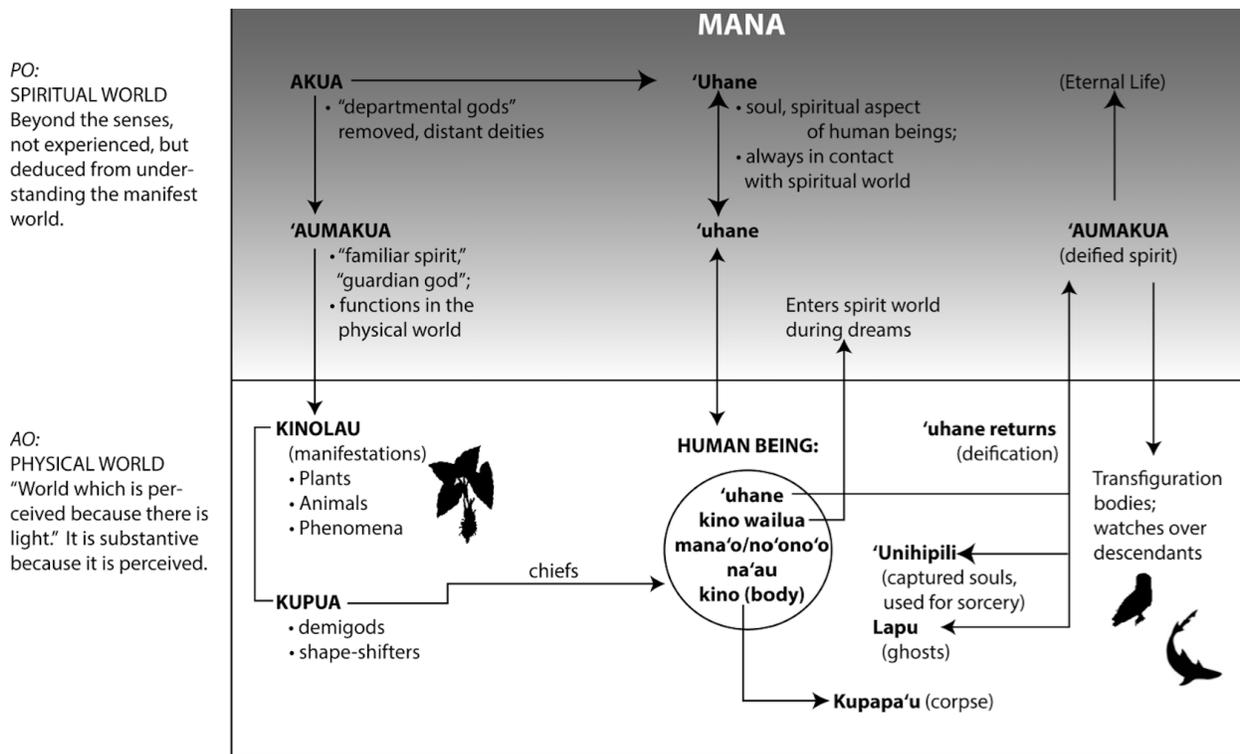


Figure 1: A depiction of the spiritual world and physical world based on Hawaiian culture.

There is also a spiritual context to Hawaiian culture. This is a deeply spiritual culture, even today. Figure 1 comes from a chart that was actually hand drawn on a piece of paper for me by a Hawaiian elder and university professor some thirty-five years ago now. What we see on the top half is the unmanifest, the spiritual world, and on the bottom half we have the physical world. There are a whole lot of arrows crossing back and forth over that boundary. These two interpenetrate each other; more specifically, the unmanifest world interpenetrates into the manifest world. In the upper left, "akua" refers to the high gods. They are in charge of the oceans, the weather, big things like that. These are busy gods. There are little "pieces" of them that present themselves in more accessible ways to humanity, and these are called 'aumakua. 'Aumakua is a familiar spirit, or guardian spirit, or it could be a family spirit. An extended

family has a particular ‘aumakua. This is who you are going to pray to for your day-to-day small-scale stuff. The ‘aumakua is also known for miraculous rescues. It was called in the old days “the life from the ‘aumakua”; you are just about to die when someone/something pulls you back. That is life from the ‘aumakua.

Both of these types of deities—akua and ‘aumakua—have physical manifestations in the real world. The taro plant is an example. The stem of the taro plant is one particular god, and the corm—the part that you eat—is a different god. It does not “represent” the god, it *is* the physical manifestation of the god. Perhaps you have been to Holy Communion. What did Jesus do? He said, “This is my body, this is my blood, do this often in remembrance of me.” In the Catholic Church, when the priest does his transubstantiation ritual over the bread and wine, literally transforming it into the body and blood of Christ. You have to eat it all, you have to drink it all, you cannot throw it away. Although it looks like bread and wine, no, it is the body and blood of Christ. Much the same idea operates here; this is the body of the god. And there are lots of these. The big gods have many physical manifestations in the world, so they are everywhere, all over the place. In fact, the islands themselves are children of the gods. Even the rocks are bodies of the gods.

Figure 1 shows a human being in the lower center of the chart, and the human being has a soul that is always in connection with the spirit world. Do we have that? Do you have a soul? Are you sure? Do you know? Can you check? Where is it anyway? I think I left mine at home. We do not know because science cannot find a soul or consciousness. You cannot dissect the brain and find where your consciousness is. We do not know how it works, we do not know what it is, we do not know where it comes from. Well, your consciousness is your part of divinity. It is the piece of God in you. That is why the greeting in Hinduism, “Namaste,” is “I recognize the God in you.” You have that piece. Unfortunately, you have this outer coating that may or may not be attractive, you have this personality that may or may not be attractive, and you have to deal with that. Still, you have that spark of divinity inside yourself.

But wait, there’s more! When you die, there is the possibility that your relatives will take you—if you are a particularly pious, wonderful, awesome person—and perform a ceremony that is actually going to turn you into an ‘aumakua. When that has been done, you can manifest in a physical form back in the world too. But unlike in the first case, where all the taro plants are manifestations of Lono (the god of agriculture), in this second case it is just that particular bird or that shark that is Uncle Fred. It is not all sharks, not all members of the species, but just that shark that is Uncle Fred, and Uncle Fred is out there and he will save your life. There is a story that I had heard from an elder I had interviewed about how he was out fishing with his grandfather. They had just put out all the lines when a shark bumped the side of the boat. Grandpa says, “Oh, we gotta go back.” The grandson says, “Wait a minute, wait a minute, we

just got here!” Grandpa says, “Shut up. Pack it up, we are going back.” They packed up, went in, pulled in the boat, got out, sat on the porch, and Grandfather said, “Now watch.” And then this radical storm came up. True story. There are lots of these kinds of stories in Hawai‘i. Pele, the volcano goddess, is the ‘aumakua of certain families on the big island of Hawai‘i. I saw on television a whole special on how Pele tends to show up in different forms. She can be an old woman, she can be a beautiful young girl, she can be a little white dog. These young guys who were being interviewed were drunk and were driving over the Saddle Road between the high volcanoes on the island of Hawai‘i. It was a dangerous road back then. They were laughing in their pickup truck and weaving all over the road, and then they saw this beautiful young woman standing by the side of the road with her thumb out. So they pick her up. She gets in the front seat of the pickup truck between the two of them and says, “Got a cigarette?” They said, “Yeah, here you go.” She says, “Thank you” and she lights it *out of the palm of her hand*. In the interview, the guys said, “We instantly sobered up.” That is life from the ‘aumakua. This is still alive and well in Hawai‘i.

I did about a hundred interviews with Hawaiians for a major exhibition that actually never happened, but that is okay because I still got to do all of the interviews. This was with artists, conservationists, environmentalists, sovereignty activists, culture keepers, and voyagers. I pulled all that together and there seemed to be five values there. One of these is kuleana. The best explanation I can give for this word is it is like your “turf.” If it is your turf, that means you have rights to it. You do not want anybody messing with your turf, you do not want anybody impinging on your turf, because that is your turf. But on the other hand, you have the responsibility to take care of it. These two things go together. If you read the entire Declaration of Human Rights, the word “responsibility” is mentioned zero times. We have the rights to this, we have the rights to that, but there is no talk about responsibilities. Your kuleana could be the plot of land that you have to look after. It could be your job on the voyaging canoe; a guy has the steering paddle and while he is there, that is his kuleana. It could be your family, or your residence, or your pets, or your job, or your homework. These are your kuleana and your job is to take care of these. What happens if you do not? Things get out of balance. That is a problem we do not want. Or, if you infringe on someone’s kuleana, they might get cranky with you. That is not good.

I live in Baltimore, where there is a rat problem. If you have a backyard that is all overgrown and full of trash, that is a haven for rats, and the rats are going to live and breed there and then they are going to spread out to all of your neighbors. You could say that it is your right to let your yard go, because this is a land of freedom and independence and personal rights and personal property, and you have the right to do whatever you want to do with your yard. Nobody can tell you what to do. But on other hand, you are causing a problem for everybody else. So, is it your responsibility or is it not? Well, if you understand yourself as existing within a network of people and relationships that form your community, then you

have kuleana there, you have responsibility there. You are causing trouble for other people. So, it is a different way of thinking about how we interact with each other.

Pono is the second value that came out of the interviews. You have to do it right, whatever it is that you are going to do. You need to do it correctly. You need to do the right thing. This, in Hawaiian terminology, does not mean just the right thing for you, or the right thing for that person over there, or the right thing according to some moral code or set of laws that you have come across—“Well, the Bible says I need to do this” or whatever it is. No, pono asks, “What does this situation require?” If there is a conflict, if there is a crisis, what does the situation require of you to do? Sometimes, you are going to take the hit for the greater good. That is pono. It means to act in a way that is cosmically right. You have to step beyond yourself for a minute and ask, “Okay, how do we make this situation pono? How do we bring things back into balance? What do I need to do in this situation to make that happen?” Pono is a very powerful word and a very powerful concept. This is something you have got to do on the canoe—act in a way that is pono—whether it is taking care of the right rituals, or if you are chief, taking care of the responsibilities that you have as a chief. In Spike Lee’s movie *Do the Right Thing*, the main character diffuses a potential deadly situation by throwing a trash can through the plate glass window of his friend’s restaurant. All the people who are about to commit violence instead trash the restaurant. Normally, you would not think that throwing a trash can through somebody’s window would be doing the right thing. But in this case, that was what the situation required. His friend recognized that too, even though his restaurant was totally trashed.

I am talking about two related Hawaiian processes, both of which are called ho‘oponopono. Ho‘o is a causative prefix; it means to make something happen. We just learned what Pono is. When you duplicate a word in Hawaiian, you are really emphasizing it. So ho‘oponopono means to make things very right. That is what we want to do; if things go out of balance, we need to bring them back in harmony. It is the same term that you might use for dealing with a messy room. A Hawaiian would come along and say, “You need to ho‘oponopono your room.” We are setting it right, putting things back in their place, recreating order and balance and harmony so that everybody can feel like, “Okay, things are where they should be.”

There are two processes I am talking about tonight, and the first one is the traditional practice of conflict resolution in Hawaiian society called, as I just said, ho‘oponopono. In this process, the conflict is usually going to be within the extended family. This is a very holistic-thinking culture, so illness is often associated with things being out of balance, which is not unusual for indigenous cultures. There are four kinds of illness Hawaiians recognize. One is illness caused by the grudge of a relative. Do we have that in this country, in our culture? I never heard of it. Yes, you have illness when there is exam time, and we have stress-related illness, but this is something you might not even know is there. Suddenly, you are sick.

Enter the kahuna, which for purposes of this moment we will call the doctor, the healing Kahuna. “Kahuna” is like “doctor,” like I’m Dr. Herman. It means “expert,” it means you have achieved a level of expertise in your field. So, it is applied to canoe builders, geographers, experts of any sort. And there are healing kahunas—kahuna lā’au lapa’au. When this kahuna applies the usual remedy for that illness and it does not heal, then ah-ha! There is something else going on here. We are going to have to look in a little bit deeper. Of course, everyone who is affected by the problem, whatever the conflict—it might extend outside of the family—is going to be brought in. Then the process is going to be led by either a senior family member, or once again, a healing kahuna—somebody who has generally seen this done and participated in it before, somebody who knows how this works and is good at it.

There are a number of terms that help elucidate the thinking about how this process works.¹ The first is that there is some kind of fault or transgression or error. This is called “hala” in Hawaiian. Let’s say everything was hunky-dory, and now things have fallen apart. Something has happened. Somebody has done something that set things out of balance. It may not be immediately obvious what it was, because it may be everybody else just kind of growls for a little while. But then something else happens, and then something snaps. There is a problem. We use the term “holding a grudge.” Who is holding the grudge? The person who did the fault? Or the person the fault was done to? The two are connected: that person did the action, and you are holding the grudge. You want to put that grudge down, do you not? How is that going to happen? That is what we have to accomplish here. You both need to let go of whatever it is. That is what we need the process for.

Say you are holding a grudge, so you go tell your friends, and your friends are now pissed off at so-and-so over there who caused the problem. Meanwhile, so-and-so is saying, “I do not know why she is such a jerk,” and she is talking to her friends, and they are talking to their friends, and now everybody is pissed off. Or maybe somebody goes, “I need to go take the air out of his tires of his car.” Stuff is starting to happen. This is getting entangled. The Hawaiian word for that is “hihia,” entangled. Any person getting involved adds another thread to this situation, and these threads get all twisted and snarled and tangled. What we want to do is release these cords that bind us in this conflict. Untie them, release them, unbind them. It might take several rounds to peel off the layers. So, we peel off the first layer of so-and-so letting the air out of such-and-such’s tires, but we have not gotten down to the original grudge and the original action that caused the grudge. But meanwhile, we can clear up that one layer. “Okay, I am sorry I let the air out of your tires.” “Okay, I forgive you.” We peel off layers until we get down to what is the real root of the problem.

To do this we need an atmosphere of absolute truth and sincerity. The Hawaiian term is “‘oia‘i‘o.” You cannot be lying or not entirely forthcoming, even to yourself. This is a very powerful concept, one I had not looked at in a long time. I thought, “Oh, I had forgotten about that one! Wow, I

could see where I am not entirely being truthful with myself about certain things.” I found out, for example, that I really love my righteous indignation! Anybody else? Yeah, it is fun, is it not? “Damn those people, it is all their fault!” So easy in this current political climate. Anyway, you have to have absolute truth.

Hey, remember how the God is there in the food? Well the God is there in the ceremony as well. If you can imagine in your mind that God, or whatever you picture as the ultimate deity, is right there in front of you and saying so, you cannot hide anything. Think about that, meditate on that some time. Imagine if the deity was standing right there, he/she/it seeing right through you, and waiting for you to fess up. That is kind of the environment we want to have.

There also has to be, of course, forgiveness. There has to be repentance, confession: “Yes, you are right, I did let the air out of your tires, but I did so because Johnny told me you were a jerk,” and so forth down the layers. There has to be the apology. There has to be, ultimately, retribution as well. Now if things get a little heated, the leader of this process can basically call a timeout: ho‘omaluu. Again, there is that word “ho’o” to cause something to happen, “malu” means shade. So, we are putting a shelter over you, we are putting you in the shade for a while. Throughout this whole process, traditionally, the participants are talking directly to the leader of the session. This is one way of avoiding those arguments that can come up. But still, you can get pretty pissed off listening to so-and-so describe what he or she thinks you did. And you are thinking, “I did not do that at all, that’s not what happened.” You have been there? Me too. Sometimes you might need to call a timeout on this discussion. This is why it could take a while to get through this process.

Ultimately, in Hawaiian society, what we want is aloha, which is an open hearted, compassionate, and loving, kindness. To greet a person Hawaiian style, you hug, Hawaiian style. You press the bridge of your nose and forehead to that part of the other person's face. While you are there, you are usually holding each other's heads so you do not crash into each other. And while you are in this position, you breathe in the essence of the other person, and breathe out. Then you hug, and I always like to feel my heart pressing against the other person's heart. Then I take another breath—a nice, long, slow, deep breath while our hearts are together. If the aloha is not there, they usually do not stay hugging you that long: “Okay, I had enough, you can go now.” But if they have the aloha, they will stay hugging and they will feel it. And it is powerful. Hawaiians will recognize very quickly if you have aloha or not. It is really a matter of asking, “Are you a genuine human being?” This is usually what indigenous people call themselves: “the real people, the genuine human beings.” Are you a genuine human being, or do you have some walls up?

I spent some time working way out in the Ulithi atoll, the island you could walk across in twenty minutes. People wearing loincloths. Then I came back to Yap proper, Yap Islands, the two-lane highway. From there I came back to Guam, four-lane highway. Back to Honolulu, six-lane highway. I could see the

aloha and the indigeneity decreasing with each step. Then I get back to the East Coast. It is probably not true here in beautiful Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, because it is such a small and cozy community, but if you are walking down the street in an East Coast city and people are walking the other way, what happens? Nothing, that is what happens. Because in my experience they are not paying any attention to you at all. Unless they are African-American. I live in Baltimore, which is predominantly African-American, and at least among men—I do not have a report from women on this—the African-American man is always going to look at me. And I am waiting for it because I know it is going to happen. They are walking along and they are going to look at me, and I am going to look at them. I am going to say “How you doing?” And they are going to go, “How is it going?” and then we walk on past. The white guy, he is going to look at his watch, because he does not want to have a human interaction, that is too much for him. They have the shield up. They have the wall up.

Now let us get down to the nuts and bolts of the process itself. You have your group together, and you have your leader. There is going to be an opening prayer and we are going to evoke the gods. They are already there, but we are going to call their attention to what is going on. And you can have prayer any time. Then the leader is going to go around and question the participants, and they are going to speak back directly to the leader. The leader is going to go around as many times as it takes to get to the root of the problem. I read one story about this, where a guy had a wound on his leg. It was not healing, not responding to medicine. They figured, “Okay, there is something we have got to deal with here. Let us do the whole ho‘oponopono.” After about three rounds, it finally came out that Auntie over there was really angry at this kid for something he had done. She never said anything about it, she just did the evil eye on him, except Hawaiians know how this stuff works. So he is ill, the wound is not responding, and now the cause finally comes out. This is what it is. Okay, how can we make it up to Auntie? That is what is going to happen next. Everybody has got to go through this self-scrutiny and this atmosphere of absolute truthfulness to really get it out on the table. We can take the time-outs whenever we need to, to keep things from overheating, but ultimately you have to confess. Ultimately, that is what this is about.²

Then we have the “setting to right.” We have some kind of repentance, figuring out whatever kind of retribution. How are we going to straighten this out? Okay, I have to do something for Auntie now to make her feel that balance has been restored. She needs to feel that you paid back in whatever form—blood, work, labor, food, whatever it is—so she feels like that balance has been restored. If you do not do that, then things stay out of balance, and that is what we do not want to have happen. Mutual forgiveness, the release of guilt, grudges, tensions, and so forth brought on by the wrongdoing, and then the closing prayer. The leader may summarize what has transpired, and the matter is over.

This comes to the notion of “forgive and forget.” Of course, you could never forget what really happened, but I heard these Hawaiians many years ago talking about Hawaiian spirituality. The guy said,

“The thing is, in the West, you will say, ‘I forgive you, but I will never forget what you did to me.’” Well, then it is not over. You are still holding the grudge. It is not like you literally forget, but the matter is closed. You do not bring it up again. There cannot be a residual grudge. The Hawaiian for “over” is “pau.” It is a great word. The matter is pau, it is over, it is done, that is final. Now you can go on and not have the grudges, not have the irritation. You have forgiven each other. That is the general process, traditional process.

Now we are ready to take it up a level. There is another great Hawaiian word here, “kaona.” Kaona is “hidden meanings.” In Hawaiian chant, in Hawaiian poetry, even probably the one I did earlier, there is kaona. There are layers of meaning, and Hawaiians really excel in this particular art. I know a hula called “Aia Moloka‘i ku‘u ‘iwa.” “There on Moloka‘i [a neighboring island] is my dear little frigate bird. Let me talk for a minute while you and I think. Yes, there it is on an island called Moku Ho‘oniki” (which is a real island). “Ho‘oniki” means “to pinch.” “And there on the hot plains of Kalaupapa.” Then there is the lunging of the swordfish and the tumbling of the surf and back to “There on Moloka‘i is my dear little frigate bird.” This is about love and sex, ladies and gentlemen; that is what this song is about. The body is telling one story; the words are telling another. That is just the next layer of meaning, and then it goes up from there to secret or sacred meanings.

Let us bring this back to something you are all familiar with. You have had some exposure to Christianity and we relied on that in an earlier example. You might even be a church-going person. Imagine Sacré-Coeur in Paris. Good church-going lay people go to church on Sunday, but what do they do the other six days of the week? Live as sinners! That is what they are. These lay people are not scholars of religion so they are taking it on faith, literally. One might say, “The Bible says, the priest says, or whatever, I am just going to take it on faith because I do not know how this really works.” That is the first layer of meanings according to Christianity. Then you have the priests. These people actually went to school, studied the scriptures, got degrees, and got ordained; they know a whole lot more than your average Christian layperson. So we can look up to them as experts. The next layer, the monks and nuns, are the hardcore people. These are the people who are not just studying it and living ordinary lives. These are the people who have given everything up to really follow the instructions that Jesus laid out, and they are really trying to do it.

This is the notion of kaona. You hear a Hawaiian chant. On the first level you think, “Oh, yeah, I get what that is about.” On the second level you think, “Huh, that is really kind of interesting.” On the third level you think, “Wow, that is talking about something else altogether.” The same was true in Hawaiian society. The ordinary Hawaiian people knew a certain amount about how the spirituality and the metaphysics and the cosmology work, but then there is what the kahuna knows. “Kahuna,” remember, means expert. Kahuna literally means “the secret.” In this case, the kahuna is generally someone who has

tapped into the unmanifest world and knows how to work that barrier between manifest and unmanifest. In Figure 1, the unmanifest is up top and the manifest is down below. In our current modern-day society, most of your attention is focused down here. Does anybody here pray? What are you trying to accomplish with prayer? What you are doing with prayer is you are sending a message across this boundary into the unmanifest world, asking for some kind of action that is going to happen back down here in the manifest world.

Let us go back to this notion of the ‘aumakua, the familiar spirit, the spirit who is close and you can talk to them. Is there anything like that in Christianity? Yes, saints. What are they? People who have crossed over into the unmanifest world, but somehow, we can still ask for their intervention in the manifest world. People have called on their aid with success, and miracles were accomplished. We called on Saint so-and-so for this, and there was divine intervention. In Buddhism, this would be the Bodhisattva. Same idea: a bodhisattva is a person who, on the path to Buddhahood—which is basically the extinction of the self—decides that, “I am not going to cross over into nirvana until I have helped all other living beings cross over with me.” One in particular is Guanyin Bodhisattva, and there are versions of her with a thousand hands, because she can reach out to you. The notion here is that we can reach over into the spiritual world and bring energy down—or an intervention down—and make something happen. That is what a miracle is, something to which we cannot ascribe forces of nature, human forces; we cannot explain how it happened. And particularly, if you see some sort of cause-and-effect between when you pray and when something happens, you say, “Wow, there had to be some supernatural agency in this.”

We need to start thinking about the world a little bit differently. I was raised an Episcopalian—I am glad I was, and I still love it. For me, prayer was like you putting a message in a bottle, then throwing it up in the air and hoping somebody is there to catch it and take the message out to read it. You are just doing what you are told: “Okay, you pray like this.” Hawaiians go “No, no, no. That is not prayer. We are going to teach you about prayer.”

In Western thought, we are like billiard balls. We just bounce off each other. I am an individual, you are an individual, we have a brief interaction, then we go our separate ways. Well, physics and a lot of modern psychiatry actually say that we are more like waves than like particles.³ This is Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle. Is an atom a wave or is it a particle? Well, it is sort of both. It depends on the kind of situation it is in. Did you know there is a formula by which you can actually figure out the wavelength of yourself? It is really small in your case, but you can think of ourselves as beings of energy, not physically manifest so much as energy manifest. Jungian psychiatry will tell you this too. Then you start saying, “When I started interacting with different people, it is more like an interference pattern than like

billiard balls bouncing off each other. We are either going to make harmonics and make beautiful music together, or it is going to be noisy and nasty, depending on how we interact.”

I used the term kahuna, which is “the secret.” In the early twentieth century, a man curiously named Max Freedom Long came to Hawai‘i. He was something of an amateur parapsychologist and he came out to teach elementary school and later, opened a camera shop in Honolulu around 1920. He said, “I am really out here because I am interested in these kahunas. I hear they do miracles, so I am going to check this out.” He met up with William Brigham, the head of the Bishop Museum (the big museum in Honolulu). Brigham, who was an old man at that point already, said, “Look, I have been studying this my whole life. I still cannot figure it out, but it happens. I have seen it happen. I will tell you everything I know and you take it from there.” Brigham continued, “I do not know how they do it, but I figured out a few things. First of all, they need to have a language to talk about it, so you have to look for words and a code here. Second, if you are going to do a miracle—which is a form of action at a distance— from a scientific point of view there has to be some medium to make that happen. You have to look for the medium, and they have to have a word for talking about it.”⁴

If you go back to Figure 1, some of these words, if looked at differently, can mean something a little bit different. We have ‘aumakua, the familial spirit; and the ‘uhane, the soul; and ‘unihipili, which is sort of like a ghost, like a soul of the deceased. Now we are going to add one more word: “mana.” Mana in Hawaiian—and throughout all of Polynesia—is a cosmic form of energy. Like any kind of energy, such as electricity, it is neither good nor bad, positive nor negative. You can use it for good or evil. You can charge things with it. It flows through everything. It is really like the Tao. And yes, okay, it is like The Force. Except the guys who wrote *Star Wars* did not have this kind of science in mind. Mana is the energy that we are going to use to make miracles happen. Max Long did a lot of research on this and he saw a lot of miracles himself. One of them occurred at a beach party. Somebody who had been out on the reef had broken his leg, and the bone was sticking out of the skin. This elderly Hawaiian came over, put her hands on the leg, said a prayer, and the leg was healed. Instantly. Believe it or not.

I heard a Hawaiian elder tell a story last year just like that one. An elderly Japanese-Hawaiian guy said, “This woman fell down on the reef and she had this huge gash on her leg. We brought her into my mother’s house and my mother makes this mix out of ashes and herbs and starts spreading it on her leg and she is talking along in Hawaiian. My brother and I watched that wound close up before our eyes; no scar, right there.” This is why Max Long was so interested in these phenomena. Brigham himself had fire-walked on red-hot lava on the Big Island with the aid of two kahunas. Together, they conducted a good deal of research on this business.

Max Long concluded, after all his work—and I am emphasizing Max again just because Hawaiians do not necessarily buy this, this is Max’s construction—that there are three aspects to the self.

First, there is the 'uhane, which is like your conscious mind. This is very Jungian. Your conscious mind makes decisions and conducts rational thinking. Second, you have the subconscious. Everybody has a subconscious. It provides your dreams. It holds all of your memories. Have you ever had that experience where you are trying to think of something and you cannot remember—"What was the name of that guy?" You are talking at a dinner party or something, then you go home, go to bed, and then you wake up at three o'clock in the morning realizing, "His name was Jerry Clower, that was his name." Because your subconscious goes off on a little search, probing through all the memories until, "There it is, okay, found it. Here you go!" The subconscious does not have the ability of rational thought. That is why your dreams do not make any sense, because it is using symbology to try to talk to you, and you have to try to figure it out.

The third part of the self is the superconscious. The 'aumakua, instead of being something that is out there, is actually something that is part of you. The secret, the huna if you will, is that you have to connect to your subconscious in order to get it to connect to the superconscious. That is your prayer. That is how we really get access to what is going on in the unmanifest world. Having done that, you can ask the 'aumakua to use mana to make things happen. That is the idea.⁵

I am going to throw in one more term here. Remember how, with grudges, there is a cord that connects the grudger and the grudgee? Max Long found another word for this" "aka." Aka is sort of sticky, shadowy stuff. Imagine we are coated with spider-web material, and you and I have an interaction. When we walk away, there is a thin spider-web cord that stretches out between us on the etheric plane. Whether the interactions are good or bad, it does not matter. The more interaction we have, the thicker the cord, the more there is. This is the medium along which you can send mana to the other person. This is how sorcery works, too.

Max Long wrote all of this up in 1948 in a book called *The Secret Science Behind Miracles*. It is amazing because it is scientific thinking applied to how miracles work. There are real miracles in the world. There are even everyday miracles. Have you ever had that experience where you are thinking about somebody and all of a sudden, the phone rings and it is them? How did that work? Somehow, the message that they are going to call you came through some kind of medium, through the ethers, to you before it happened. Well, there are explanations for that but they are not scientific.

Morrnah Nalamaku Simeona, who has since passed away, came from a family of healing kahuna and at age three, apparently, her gift was recognized. She was taught oral tradition, but then she went to Catholic school, so she learned about that form of Christianity. Then she went on to study religious traditions of India and China, as well as the work of Edgar Cayce. Finally, at the age of sixty-three, she developed a new form of ho'oponopono that brings in elements of these other traditions, creating a form of self-healing.

We are going to have to talk about karma here. Karma is simply a fancy word for cause and effect. It's a "what you put out is what you get back" kind of thing. But, we are going to throw in samsara, the cycle of rebirth. I am talking about past lives. Mornah quite rightly brings karma and samsara together into her approach, just as they are conjoined in Hinduism. Past life is an easy concept to understand. Our consciousness is energy, is it not? Where does it go when you die? I do not know. Well, if we think of our lives as sine waves, you are born, you die, and then you pop out through the other side and you have a new lifetime. The wave keeps on going. When the Buddha talked about past lives, he said "Let us imagine I have a candle here. It is lit, and I have another one here that is unlit. I take the one with the flame and I bring it over here and I light the other candle, and then I blow out the first one. Now, is the flame on the second candle the same flame? Or a different flame?" It is a tricky little concept here.

The point is that our karma stays with us as we move through cycles of birth and death. It's like a boomerang: you are throwing out lies, deception, pain. It is going to come back and whack you, eventually. Maybe not in this lifetime, but sooner or later it is going to. Here is another example of karma: have you ever had the experience where you meet somebody for the first time and you instantly hate them? What is the deal? You have never met them before, and instantly you are thinking, "I hate this person." That is karma, the past-life memories that make you think, "Uh-oh, I do not want to be around this person." This is why we are going to extend the conflict resolution idea a little deeper here. In any interaction, any business, you are tied into a whole network of people with whom you interact. If we take it to an energy level, imagine a jumbled pile of threads, but imagine they are energy instead. They are aka cords. You are living in this web of energy. Why are you here in this room right now? What brought you to Juniata College? How did this happen? What sequence of events and decisions led you to be here, that you are in this room right now hearing this talk?

According to not just Mornah Simeona, but pretty much everybody who studies this topic, we are constantly living through our karmic memories. When you make a decision, you have memory that comes up first. You have energy that comes up first. There was this great book by Doug Boyd called *Swami* (1976). At the end, he asked this one Hindu Swami in India, "Do we have a free choice?" The Swami said, "Oh, yes, we do. But most people almost never exercise it." That is because free choice means you are acting freely without all these karmic ties.

I put this all together in Figure 2. Mornah's school does it in a pyramid,⁶ but I have the consciousness ('uhane) surrounded by the subconscious because I really like the idea that your consciousness is embedded within this giant pile of memories. You have to go through the subconscious to get to the superconscious.

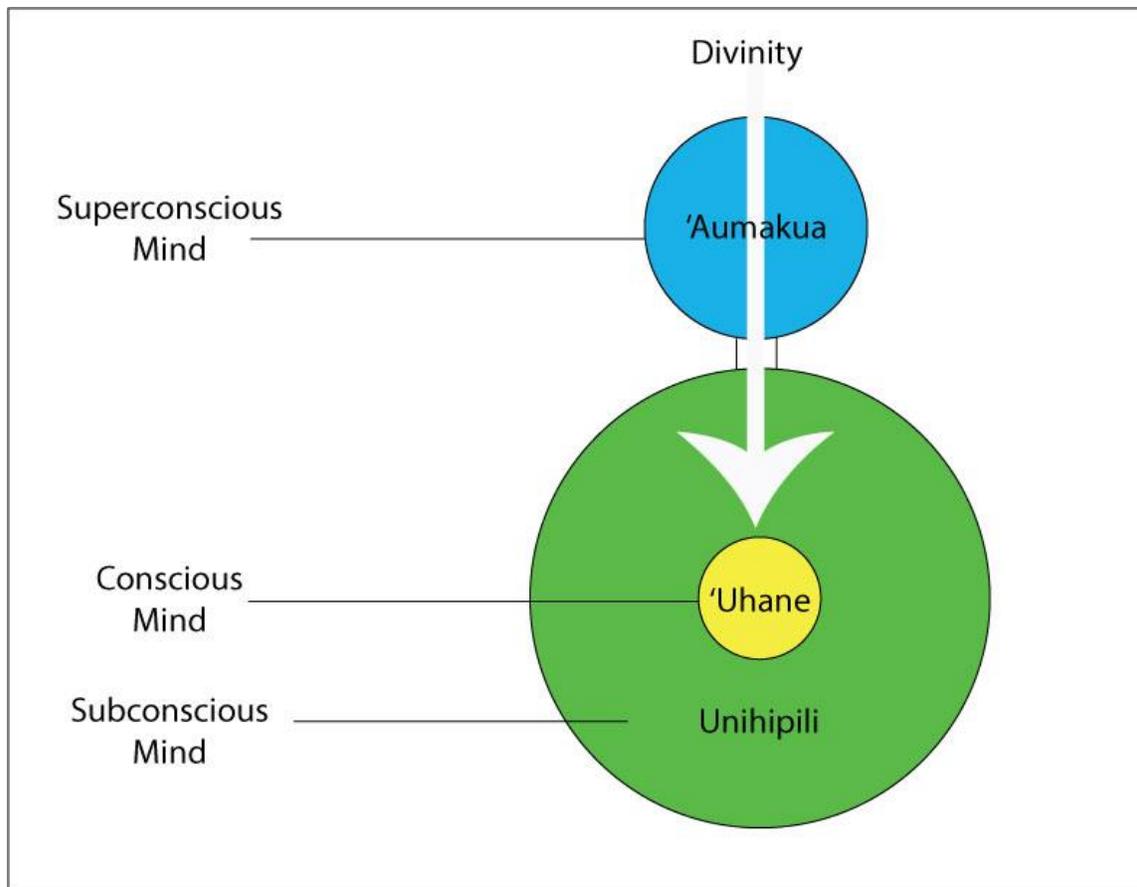


Figure 2: A depiction of the superconscious, conscious, and subconscious minds.

The ‘aumakua or superconscious is kind of hanging out there up at the top, just watching. The ‘aumakua does not interfere unless you call on it, or unless it realizes, “Okay, I have to step in now, this is out of control.” Hawaiians knew how to work this connection. I’ve drawn a little bridge to the ‘aumakua. Your ‘unihipili or subconscious makes the connection to the ‘aumakua, and now you can communicate and bring the mana in. In the case of this particular practice, also called ho’oponopono, what you are trying to do is clean up these memories. If you think of your memory bank as a big hard drive holding all this information—not just from this lifetime, but from past lifetimes—Mornah Simeona’s ho’oponopono process is like bringing it into a demagnetizer and wiping files off. Once you have wiped some files off your hard drive, you have some more room and you can start moving around more freely.

Now let us say you run into that person who you hated instantly. You do this practice of cleaning up your memories and then you say to yourself, “I do not really hate this person anymore. Now I can interact with this person freely, I am no longer being jerked by those strings anymore.” You are basically doing a conflict resolution practice within yourself. Same idea, same kind of process, same language, and some of the same techniques as traditional ho’oponopono, except you do not need to get the group together. You do not need to have a kahuna. The other person with whom you have the grudge does not

need to be there because it is all connected up on the energy level. You can do this with people on the other side of the planet. It does not matter.⁷

I have worked with a particularly gifted woman, Mornah Simeona's student, for thirty-some years now. She is a white woman, from Wisconsin, I think. She met Mornah and Mornah said, "You are coming with me. You have a gift." You can pay this woman to do this process for you in a much bigger, faster way. She said, "You know, sometimes you really need the big D-9 bulldozer to just come in and move those giant piles of junk." Every time I go to Hawai'i, she is the first person I will see. I will not work in Hawai'i, or for that matter—anywhere else in the world—without having a session with her. Clean it up. She said to me at one point, "When you think about it, we are pretty civilized, right? Let us just remind ourselves of the history of atrocities in human life. War, slavery, human sacrifice, torture, and executions. This is what human history is full of. And, of course, just plain, good old fighting. When you think about past lives, there is a lot of awful business that went on back then—in fact, plenty of awful business going on today—and we still carry these ties towards each other." We are always stuck in memory replay. We are always playing through these patterns. She used to say—I am going to use a profanity, so I hope nobody is going to be freaked out—"We are attracted to our shit," meaning our karmic shit. "Oh, I really like this person," and then you end up getting into the worst possible relationship and say, "Oh my god, this is awful, how did this happen? And why does it keep happening to me?" What you want to do then, is you want to go to the subconscious, which connects to the superconscious. It is a process, but it is kind of like prayer, basically. Except that you are really talking to the subconscious and the superconscious.

I am going to ask you to link up to the 'aumakua, and the 'aumakua is the passageway to Divinity, or whatever you want to call it: the absolute, the universal mind. Mornah calls it the "I." I like that word. For those of you who haven't read the Bible, remember that classic movie with Charlton Heston, *The Ten Commandments*? Moses goes up on Mount Sinai, sees the Burning Bush, is told to take his shoes off because he is on sacred ground, and this ball of fire (as it is depicted in the movie) gives him the Ten Commandments. God says, "Alright, you have to go down and tell the Jewish people, this is what you have to do." And Moses says "Um, and who shall I say sent me? Because they are going to want to know who I was talking to." What does God say? "I am." That is what he says, "Tell them 'I am' sent you." That is pretty heavy stuff if you ask me.

People often just gloss over the notion of God. It's taken for granted. But what is God exactly? They go, "Oh, you know: God." No, I do not know. Again, there is the sort of common, everyday notion of some guy up there with a snowy white beard. Then there is the theologian's god, and then there is the monk's god, and then it becomes a whole different thing.

A key component of all of this is intuition. What is intuition? "Oh! I just suddenly had this idea. Where did that come from? I do not know." Well, that is the 'aumakua speaking to you. And how does

God speak? Does He speak in a roaring hurricane? No. God speaks in a still, small voice. Is God omniscient? They tell me yes. Is God omnipotent? They tell me yes. Is God omnipresent? They tell me yes. Well, therefore, God can only be one thing and what is that? Everything. That is what the Buddha said, and that is what the Christian theologians say. It is all God.

I once had an LP, a record, and it was called “Everything You See is Me.” I have always liked that phrase. So intuition is your link. I am not a fan of Dr. Wayne Dyer, but I found this quote by him: “If prayer is you talking to God, then intuition is God talking to you.” Same idea. That is Divinity coming down to say, “Hey, let me give you a little nudge.” One of the elders that I work with, the gentleman with the shark story, always says, “I got the nudge. Just got the nudge. I had to do something about this. I felt ‘Yup, you have got to go, you have got to do this.’” I have felt it once or twice in my own life.

If you want to know more about these two ho‘oponopono practices, there are about a zillion books out there. Some of these are on the traditional approach and some are on Mornnah Simeona’s approach. There are books on huna. Max Freedom Long’s books have all been republished. There is a lot of information out there.

I am going to bring us back now to our canoe and bring our journey to a close here. You have been on the canoe now for an hour and thirteen minutes and it has been a really wonderful voyage. Let us come back to learning how to live together. That is really what peace and conflict resolution is about. How do we learn to live together? What techniques can we employ to help us learn to live together? For me, studying the canoe and studying small islands has helped me think about “being on the canoe” as a metaphor. This planet is the island that we have. We are all interconnected. We are environmentally interconnected, we are telecommunications-wise interconnected, we are politically and economically interconnected. We cannot go someplace else. It is just like being on Falalop back on the Ulithi atoll. There is no “Planet B.” I encourage you all to think about this island mentality. It could be in any situation, any kind of business or company you are in, any kind of endeavor. You are on the canoe. Make it work.

NOTES

1. Mary Kawena Pukui, E.W. Haertig, and Catherine A. Lee, *Nānā I Ke Kumu (Look to the Source)* (Honolulu: Queen Lili’uokalani Children’s Center, 1972).
2. E. Victoria Shook, *Ho‘oponopono: Contemporary Uses of a Hawaiian Problem-Solving Process* (Honolulu: East-West Center Studies: 1985). This contains more information about this technique in practice.
3. Stanislav Grof, *Beyond the Brain: Birth, Death, and Transcendence in Psychotherapy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985.) This provides an extensive discussion of the wave-nature of human consciousness.

4. Max Freedom Long, *The Secret Science Behind Miracles* (Library of Alexandria, 1948).
5. Enid Hoffman *Huna: A Beginner's Guide* (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Para Research, 1976.) This provides a decent introduction to doing this process yourself, based mostly on Max Freedom Long.
6. For a discussion of Mornah's model, see <http://www.self-i-identity-through-hooponopono.com/assets/who-english-abridged.pdf>.
7. More elaboration on this can be found here: <http://www.self-i-identity-through-hooponopono.com/assets/who-english-abridged.pdf>.